

PARTICIPATION REPORT

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 25 March 2020

From: Claire Betteridge - Service Development Manager

Electoral division(s): All

Purpose: To provide an update on Participation Service news and events.

Recommendation: To comment or provide feedback on the range of consultation events and activities the Participation Service provide for children in care and care leavers.

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Summary:

- There is a plan for participation activities throughout 20/21.
- The team continue to promote the use of the Mind of My Own (MOMO) APP offering individual and group training.
- The Participation Team hosted a number of activities over the February half term.
- The Care Leaver Forum continues to run in Wisbech and Cambridge and is beginning to develop plans and projects to work on.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee requested an update on the work of the Participation Service at each of its meetings.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Update on Involvement of Young People

Consultation

- 2.1.1** The participation team continues to have discussions with young people who might be interested in being co-opted members of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee, to ensure optimum attendance by young people at each meeting. We are keen to consider alternative ways of engaging young people in this meeting and to this end we are meeting on the 2 April 2020 to explore this. This meeting we will also discuss one of the areas for improvement that was identified in the Cambridgeshire ILACS Focus Visit of our Children in Care service which took place in February 2020, to strengthen the evidence of the impact of children's involvement and participation, so that children are told what is being done in response to their views and wishes, both for their own individual case plans and when contributing to strategic service planning.

The current co-opted member of the committee has indicated that they can no longer commit to attend as they have been offered a training opportunity which will have an impact on their availability. His contribution during his term of his office has been acknowledged by a letter of thanks from the Chairman.

Voices Matter (Children in Care Council (CICC))

- 2.1.2** The last Voices Matter meeting took place on the 17 February 2020. This coincided with Care Day, on the 14 February, which is a celebration of children and young people with care experience.

The Voices Matter meeting involved a session with a local celebrated artist Xidus Pain. Xidus specialises in delivering Lyric Writing workshops. Six young people attended, three of whom had not been to a Voices Matter meeting before and, and at the end they said they want to get further involved with the activities and meetings we offer.

During the course of the day the group worked with Xidus to produce their own lyrics about being in care, their family and interests. Xidus talked about his work and how he had made a rap to celebrate the Queen's diamond jubilee. The session started with Xidus playing six tracks and asked the group to think about how the music made them feel and what kinds of images it made them think of, and they each shared their thoughts. The group then had time to write phrases or words on a sheet of paper, which he used this to do some "freestyle rap" as well as incorporating some elements of The Promise.

The words that the group wrote on the sheet included:-

- Winding roads
- Sun
- Countryside
- Motorcycle
- Voices Matter
- Rejection
- We all have problems but we are strong enough to overcome them
- Cars
- Racing
- Pumping the ride
- Good to do homework

The young people were then asked to write key things about themselves and life, this was the beginning of the lyrics for the young people's own rap which they went onto record later on in the afternoon. It was agreed with the young people that they would wait to hear their own recording to decide if they wanted to showcase it at the Awards Ceremony in April. We will also explore with the young people if their recording can be used in training for the children's social care workforce.





Feedback from young people about the meeting

- Everything was good nothing was bad
- I liked it and would come again
- Making our own rap, everything was good
- I liked rapping, it was fun to express myself

Impact

- The session with Xidus pain supported the group of young people to express themselves and get creative.
- By the end of the day the three young people who had not met any of the group were well integrated and working well together as a group and as individuals, to produce a rap of their own.
- Themes that came out from the discussions held on the day including not having contact arranged with significant people that young people had asked to see, being able to visit the grave of a deceased parent and having purposeful activities to get involved in when a young person isn't able to attend school. All of these issues have been passed to the relevant teams to address and advise us of follow up actions so we can feedback to the young people and support any further related work that may arise.

- Going forward, we plan to hold more frequent Voices Matter meetings - at least six times per year - in order to further enhance the work of this CICC and provide more opportunities for consultation and co-production work. Where possible, themes will align with the themes of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee which will be used as discussion points within the CICC meeting. The next Voices Matter meeting is on the 7 April 2020, and will have a theme of preparing for independence.

2.1.3 Just Us Groups

We hosted a Just Us Group over the February half term which was a joint session with colleagues from the 'library presents' team and offered a Samba drumming session. 12 young people came along to this session, five of whom had not been to any events previously. Eight foster carers also joined in with the activity.



Impact

- The session provided the Participation Team the opportunity to meet children and young people and promote our events to encourage their involvement.

The children and young people feedback was:-

- It was good, it would be better with more instruments
- Great event, perfect for 'all'
- Great family activity!
- Drumming rhythm happy
- Happy
- Happy & Calm!
- Learnt rhythms
- Enjoyed drumming today, great feeling :-)
- Stress relief!
- I really enjoyed drumming today, made me feel happy
- It was good.
- It was ok but it would have improved by having more things to play
- I loved the drums
- Noise! Legitimate co-ordinated noise!
- I don't have as much rhythm as I thought!

- Alive :-)
- Yes drumming and I am happy

Going forward we will introduce a more structured approach for consulting with the young people who attend this group over themes and issues that are important to Children In Care, and feeding back the difference their contributions have made to practice. Where possible, themes will align with the themes of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee which will also feed into discussion at the CICC meeting.

2.1.4 Care Leaver Forum

Since November 2019 we have been supporting two groups of care leavers to meet in either Cambridge city or the Wisbech area. The meetings are taking shape with a steadily growing group of regular participants who are interested to be consulted about their experiences and engage in wider participation and co-production activities.

The Cambridge group have identified access to affordable housing for care leavers as an area they want to focus on and the plan is to invite Phil Turton, a Specialist Personal Adviser (PA) in the leaving care service, to help them think about how they want to progress with this area of work.

Impact

- These meetings are providing valuable opportunities for young people to share their views in a relaxed environment with adults who understand the issues that arise when a young person has been looked after and the challenges that they can sometimes face when leaving care.
- The young people are now proactively taking forward a topic that is important to them to discuss with key officers of the council how they may be able to affect service improvement in the area of affordable housing for care leavers.

2.1.5 Children in Care Council (CICC) contribution to the OFSTED ILAC Focussed Inspection February 2020

We made contact with 15 young people to invite them to meet with the inspectors. Whilst most of the young people were interested, they were unable to get involved due to other commitments which could not be rearranged. On the day we supported two young CICC members to meet with the lead inspector. They talked positively about their foster carers, the support they were afforded in various areas of their lives, such as education and the plans they have for the future. They were able to talk about some of the activities and meetings that they have attended with the participation team. The Inspectors enjoyed meeting these two young people and appreciated their time. As noted above, we know we need to strengthen how we complete the feedback loop and evidence the impact of the work of the CiCC and this includes working with CiCC members to develop a range of means by which they can contribute to future inspections which may also include via Skype and telephone calls.

2.1.6 Networking and Embedding Participation

We continue to attend operational based team meetings to share feedback from the children and young people who have engaged in the different activities and events we have hosted, and to share the planned participation activities and how practitioners can support young people getting involved. We have dates to meet with other colleagues over the next couple of months including a cohort of social work students and practitioners who have completed their ASYE year. The bi-monthly strategic participation meeting with key senior managers across children's social care supports the participation communication strategy; proactively considers and promotes co-production opportunities; and increase the number of children and young people engaging in and contributing to the participation strategy. Our next meeting is 26 March 2020.

2.2 Events from other organisations we have supported

The Bigger Picture hosted by the Fitzwilliam Museum offered a session over the February Half Term. However due to only two young people registering an interest they cancelled this. We are exploring with them how to engage young people in the events they offer and they are looking at hosting an afternoon tea with a visit to the Fitzwilliam for young people to come and meet the team and see what activities they can get involved with.

2.3 Activities and Work Planned

- We continue to work with a group of young people on the regional film project which will be a useful training tool. The last meeting during the February half term included working with colleagues and young people from Peterborough.
- We now have the job description for being involved in foster carer training and other job descriptions need to be finalised. Some of the young people who attend the care leavers' forum have expressed an interest in being involved in such roles, and we will be running workshops to prepare them.
- The training planned to support a group of interested young people get involved in the commissioning and contract monitoring process will be re-visited when staffing in the commissioning service allows.
- We are in the final stages of planning the annual awards ceremony which will be held on the 3 April 2019. Young people have chosen the theme for the event - a night at the movies - where everyone will be encouraged to come dressed as their favourite movie star.
- We have a Voices Matter meeting planned for the 7 April 2020, where the theme will be a discussion around planning for independence.
- We also plan to host two Just Us meetings over the Easter holidays in two areas of the county.
- The Fitzwilliam Museum are also looking to host a taster session to promote the Arts Award they offer.
- We are reviewing our Participation Strategy and Action Plan as well as preparing our annual programme of activities. A key priority is to strengthen our practice to both ensure and evidence the impact of children's involvement and participation, so that children are told what is being done in response to their views and wishes, both for their own individual case plans and when contributing to

strategic service planning.

2.4 Participation Service

Staffing

The Participation Team currently has a manager, two participation workers and some support from a business support assistant. The apprentice who was in post to promote the use of the Mind of My Own APP has now left the team as his apprenticeship came to an end. We had a leaving lunch and we will keep in touch. He plans to continue to attend the Care Leavers Forum and get involved in other co-production opportunities.

Mind of My Own

The team continues to offer training and support as a team or on a one to one basis to enhance practitioners understanding in how to use the application to capture the voice of the child. The information in Appendix 1 summarises Mind of My Own activity for January and February 2020.

3.0 CONCLUSION

We are committed to promoting and encouraging our children in care and care leavers to access various activity based events as the vehicle through which their voices can be heard, and they can also become involved in activities to influence service improvement and development. We are pleased that there is a continuing increase of new children and young people coming to events and getting involved. We will work at pace to strengthen our feedback loops to children and young people and evidencing the impact of their contributions and work.

4.0 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

4.1 A good quality of life for everyone

- Supporting vulnerable children and young people to achieve the best possible outcomes has longer term benefits for them as well as to the wider population. Where children are enabled to remain safely with their families or provided with good quality care, they are most likely to develop resilience and be more likely to remain in good physical, mental and emotional health, make better quality relationships and contribute more to the community.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

- Promoting the best outcomes for children and young people means that they are most likely to make a positive economic and social contribution into adulthood.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

- A Children’s service that is effective overall will ensure that vulnerable children and young people are supported to achieve good outcomes, including by enabling families to provide permanent, safe and loving homes to their children wherever possible.
- Where children and young people are identified as being at risk of harm, children’s services take action in order to ensure that these risks are minimised.

5.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

None identified

Source Documents	Location
None	